UNITED
NATIONS

TD

United Nations
Conference
on Trade and
Development

Distr.
GENERAL

TD/B/EX(16)/5
4 March 1998

Original: ENGLISH

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Sixteenth executive session
Geneva, 16 February 1998

SYNOPTIC RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD AT ITS SIXTEENTH EXECUTIVE SESSION

(16 February 1998)

Prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat */

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

1. The Board adopted the provisional agenda for its sixteenth executive session (TD/B/EX(16)/1), as amended by the President. (For the agenda as adopted, see annex.)

Opening statement

2. Following an opening statement by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and an ensuing discussion on the issue of the East Asian financial crisis, the Board took note of the statements made and agreed that the question of how to proceed on that issue should be explored in the near future.

---

*/ Pending the distribution of the final report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixteenth executive session (to be issued in TD/B/EX(16)/6), the secretariat is circulating this synoptic record of the sixteenth executive session for the information of delegations and other users. The final report will contain the summaries of statements made on the various items.

Item 2: Follow-up to the WTO High-level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for Least Developed Countries' Trade Development (27-28 October 1997)

3. The Board adopted the draft decision submitted by the Chairman of the open-ended consultations on the role of UNCTAD in the follow-up to the High-level Meeting (TD/B/EX(16)/L.1) and requested the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to put into immediate effect the relevant parts of the recommendations contained therein. (For the text of the decision, see below.)

Decision 445 (EX-16): Action by the Trade and Development Board on the implementation by UNCTAD of the outcome of the High-level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for Least Developed Countries' Trade Development

The Trade and Development Board,

1. Takes note of the report of the High-level Meeting (WT/COMTD/12);

2. Endorses the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance, including for Human and Institutional Capacity-Building, to Support Least Developed Countries in their Trade and Trade-Related Activities */ and notes with satisfaction that the Framework aims to ensure that trade-related technical assistance activities are demand-driven by the least developed countries and meet their individual needs effectively;

3. Invites the UNCTAD secretariat, in the context of its work programme on issues of concern to LDCs, to:

(a) Contribute, through inter-agency coordination, to providing an integrated response to the trade-related technical assistance needs of those LDCs which submitted needs assessment reports but which were not featured in pilot country round tables;

(b) Assist in refining needs assessment, as required;

(c) Help, upon request, such LDC Governments that have submitted needs assessments to prepare, jointly with other agencies/partners, a multi-year trade-related technical cooperation programme;

(d) Upon request, contribute actively and provide technical support to those round-table processes at the country level envisaged in paras 5 (e) and (f) of the Integrated Framework;

(e) Contribute to the establishment and maintenance of an integrated country data base within the scope of the Integrated Framework;

---

*/ References in this text to the Integrated Framework are to "An Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance, including for Human and Institutional Capacity-Building, to Support Least Developed Countries in their Trade and Trade-Related Activities" contained in WTO document WT/LDC/HL/1/Rev.1, of 23 October 1997.

(f) Contribute to the implementation, review, monitoring and evaluation of each country programme through an enhanced co-ordination process with the other organizations involved;

(g) Include UNCTAD activities under the Integrated Framework in the secretariat's annual report on technical cooperation to the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget and the Board;

(h) Ensure that existing relevant technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD, including country-specific, sectoral and other inter-agency programmes, are supportive of, complement and promote the effective implementation of the outcome of the High-level Meeting;

4. Invites development partners of LDCs, both bilateral and multilateral, to provide adequate extrabudgetary resources as necessary to UNCTAD to supplement regular budget allocations to implement the above activities in conformity with paragraph 5(j) of the Integrated Framework;

5. Requests the UNCTAD secretariat to ensure that the outcome of the two thematic round tables organized within the framework of the High-level Meeting is brought to the attention of the relevant Commissions and expert meetings of UNCTAD for consideration and necessary follow-up action; in particular, the outcome on trade should be referred to the Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, that on investment to the Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues, and the outcome on wider development issues to the Commission on Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development; the secretariat is requested to provide these Commissions with option papers setting out the policy options they may wish to consider in the light of the outcomes;

6. Recommends that the Secretary-General of UNCTAD consider convening an ad hoc meeting as soon as possible on GSP, GSTP and new initiatives for LDCs in the area of market access to provide an opportunity for officials and experts from member States to discuss the major new developments in their national GSP schemes, including review of their special provisions in favour of LDCs, propose measures to extend the necessary advisory services to enhance GSP/market access utilization, and follow up and monitor the announcements made in this regard during the High-level Meeting; the report of this ad hoc meeting should be brought to the attention of the Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities;

7. Requests the UNCTAD secretariat to inform the Board, on a six-monthly basis to begin as soon as possible, on progress of work in the design and in the implementation of activities related to the High-level Meeting, and in particular on:

(a) Work relating to inter-agency co-ordination, both at the headquarters level and in the field;

(b) Suggested priorities arrived at in consultation with other agencies for the implementation of its part of the outcome of the High-level Meeting, taking into account available and possible future resources;

(c) The relevant allocation of resources, including, where possible, cost estimates relating to both regular-budget and extrabudgetary activities, including those supported by the Trust Fund for LDCs;

8. Invites the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to consider, in cooperation with the relevant organizations, appropriate arrangements at the inter-agency level to ensure coordinated implementation of the outcome of the High-level Meeting and to report at the April consultations of the President of the Board for further consideration of the matter by the Trade and Development Board;

9. Recommends that, in the light of the report of the Secretary-General, the Trade and Development Board consider how best to achieve intergovernmental coordination between the relevant organizations in order to ensure the most efficient implementation of the outcome of the High-level Meeting.

892nd plenary meeting
16 February 1998

Item 3: Organization of the process of the mid-term review in accordance with the Midrand Declaration and General Assembly resolution 52/182

4. The Board launched the mid-term review process. In so doing, it agreed that Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi (Morocco), Vice-President of the Board, would conduct the informal and formal work of the review and report the outcome to the executive session of the Board on 10 July 1998. The purpose of the review would be to determine to what extent the mandate established at Midrand in terms of work programmes and institutional reforms had been implemented; to identify what remained to be completed before UNCTAD X, including any adjustment that would need to be made to fulfil commitments made at Midrand; and to make recommendations on the work programme and agendas for the Board, the Commissions and expert meetings in the period leading to UNCTAD X. The President would consult with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the presidency of UNCTAD IX (South Africa) as to how to finalize the review process and in particular how to respond to the General Assembly's request that the process should lead to a high-level meeting contributing to UNCTAD X.

5. Under this item, the Board further decided to endorse the draft guidelines relating to the efficiency and functioning of the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery presented by the Vice-President of the Board (TD/B/EX(16)/L.2) and decided that they should be put into effect immediately. (For the text of the guidelines, see below.)

Decision 446 (EX-16) Guidelines on the efficiency and functioning of the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery

Within the framework of the intergovernmental structure established at UNCTAD IX, the Trade and Development Board at its sixteenth executive session has reviewed the functioning of its intergovernmental machinery and has adopted the guidelines set out below in order to improve the working methods and enhance the functioning of that machinery. The various bodies at the different levels of the machinery, with the support of the secretariat, will apply these guidelines immediately and in a flexible manner to ensure maximum effectiveness.

General considerations

1. The role of bureaus should be an active one, both during and between sessions of the bodies concerned. Bureaus should deal with organizational and procedural matters. Should they wish to take up matters relating to the preparation of substantive issues, they should meet as extended bureaus. 1/

2. The UNCTAD calendar of meetings should be designed to ensure that expert meetings take place before the sessions of the relevant commission, and that commission sessions take place prior to sessions of the Board.

3. Delegations should be briefed on all aspects of a meeting at least four weeks before the meeting. Pre-session documentation should be distributed on time and in all languages.

4. Panels should be organized only when they can add value to the discussions of the bodies concerned. Member States should be consulted well in advance in connection with the topics of panels and the choice of panellists. The selection of panellists should be based on the need to ensure a balanced presentation of the topics selected, as well as linguistic and regional balance. Permanent missions should be informed of invitations extended to panellists or resource persons from their countries. Panellists should be properly briefed prior to meetings, and they should provide written summaries of their presentations for distribution to participants. The length of time spent on panels and the number of panellists should be limited in order to allow sufficient time for intergovernmental discussions. A written summary of the panel discussions should be produced by a rapporteur in order to ensure the necessary link with the intergovernmental debate.

5. To improve transparency and allow maximum participation, simultaneous meetings during a session should generally be avoided, and discussions on texts on which decisions must be taken, in particular agreed conclusions, should normally take place in informal plenary meetings, not in closed consultations.

6. All information relating to meetings, including preparations, documentation and outcomes, should be made available on UNCTAD's web site, which should be regarded as an integral part of meetings arrangements. Information on pre-session preparations and documentation should in principle be made available six weeks before a meeting.

7. Brief summaries should be prepared by the secretariat of all informal substantive discussions, without attribution of views to individual delegations.

Trade and Development Board and Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and Programme Budget

8. The agenda for sessions of the Board should be prepared in such a way as to allow the Board to cover all issues addressed to it in the final outcome of UNCTAD IX. It should be well focused.

1/ An extended bureau comprises the officers of the bureau, the regional group coordinators and interested delegations.

9. The Board should examine and evaluate the work of the Commissions and determine the direction of new work; it should not just take note of the Commissions' reports.

10. The Board should strive to achieve better coherence between its sessions and the sessions of the Commissions in terms of choice of items and preparation of the calendar to enable the expertise of the expert meetings to find its way up to the Board and to allow the Commissions to take account of the deliberations of the Board.

11. Preparations for the high-level segment, including the selection of the theme, the chairman and the panellists, should be transparent and based on consultations with all member States.

12. The theme of the high-level segment should be of international importance in order to attract high-level participation; the selection of the theme should take place in the first half of the year. In principle, there should be a direct link between the theme of the high-level segment and the agenda for the Board's session.

13. High-level representatives at the segment should be given an opportunity to present their views and participate fully, with the high-level segment being treated as a high-level intergovernmental debate.

14. The secretariat should prepare a summary of the discussions at the high-level segment as rapidly as possible and, if timing permits, before the end of the regular session of the Trade and Development Board.

15. The work of the Working Party should be coordinated and synchronized with the work of the relevant bodies in New York in order to ensure that the views of the Working Party are taken fully into account. Its work should also be organized in such a way as to give members sufficient time to consider documentation.

Commissions and Expert Meetings

16. The organization of work of the Commissions should be such as to allow the Commissions to devote themselves to substantive issues.

17. The bureaus of the Commissions, meeting in the appropriate configuration, should continue to function between Commission sessions with a view to dealing with, among other things: preparations for and follow-up to Commission sessions and expert meetings; preparation of proposed topics for Commission agendas and expert meetings; organization of work; documentation.

18. The number of expert meetings to be convened by a Commission should be determined by the Board.

19. Each Commission should consider the findings of its expert meetings and discuss their policy implications. It should have before it an indication by the secretariat of the nature of those policy implications and of possible action to be taken.

20. In selecting the topics for expert meetings, Commissions should ensure that topics are demand-driven, are closely related to the Commissions' work and take into

consideration issues of current interest to member States and in particular developing countries. Account must be taken of UNCTAD's comparative advantages and of the secretariat's expertise and capacity.

21. The Commissions should discuss and evaluate technical cooperation activities linked to their work programmes and make proposals to the Board. Special attention should be given to strengthening the synergy between policy dialogue, study and analysis, and technical cooperation.

22. Wherever possible, as the outcome of their work the Commissions should seek to adopt agreed conclusions of relevance to the international community, Governments and the UNCTAD secretariat. Recommendations for work to be carried out by the secretariat should be practical and realistic in terms of capacity.

23. When the Commissions request work to be carried out by the secretariat, the latter should inform the Commissions in particular of the schedule of work, the probable time of completion and reporting modalities.

24. The Commissions should have before them, at the following session, progress reports on the implementation of agreed conclusions and recommendations by the secretariat. These progress reports, which should include an evaluation of the work undertaken, should be presented to the extended bureaus before being submitted to the Commissions.

25. Experts attending expert meetings convened in accordance with paragraph 114 of "A Partnership for Growth and Development" are nominated by their Governments. All participants at expert meetings have the status of expert and serve in their personal capacity. In all matters relating to participation of experts in expert meetings, the secretariat should deal with permanent missions. Governments are encouraged to nominate non-governmental experts also.

26. To improve the effectiveness of expert meetings, the secretariat should provide experts with appropriate information on UNCTAD, its activities and procedures, and the anticipated nature of the expert meetings in question.

27. The agenda of each expert meeting should be clearly established by the Commission convening the meeting.

28. Wherever possible, as the outcome of their work expert meetings should seek to identify possible policy options relating to capacity-building and general policy guidelines.

29. After each expert meeting, it is recommended that the extended bureau of the relevant Commission meet in order to discuss the outcome of the meeting.

30. With a view to facilitating the participation of experts in expert meetings and thereby helping to improve the effectiveness of these meetings, member States are encouraged to explore means of enhancing such participation, including through contributions to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and other resources possible to finance the participation of experts from developing countries.

892nd plenary meeting
16 February 1998

Item 4: UNCTAD's publication policy in accordance with the decision of the fifteenth executive session of the Trade and Development Board

6. The Board adopted a draft decision submitted by the President of the Trade and Development Board. (For the text of the decision, see below.) The Board further agreed that the next consultations of the President of the Trade and Development Board would be devoted in part to the question of UNCTAD's publication policy.

Decision 447 (EX-16): UNCTAD's publication policy

The Trade and Development Board,

Decides that the Working Party on the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme Budget should meet as soon as possible to:

(a) Review the "Report on documentation and publications"(TD/B/EX(15)/5) of 27 May 1997 and the "Progress report on the implementation of UNCTAD's publication policy" (TD/B/EX(16)/3 and Add.1) in order for member States to ascertain to what extent the policy set out therein is in line with their objectives for the overall publications policy of UNCTAD, taking into account the current discussion in the General Assembly on the publications policy for the United Nations as a whole in the light of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/51/1946) and the comments of the Secretary-General of the United Nations thereon (A/52/685), and to enable member States to monitor that UNCTAD publications are in line with the publications policy;

(b) Recommend any changes that might need to be adopted to achieve such objectives and to ensure the role of member States in this process.

Item 5: Institutional, organizational, administrative and related matters

(a) Designation of intergovernmental bodies for the purposes of rule 76 of the rules of procedure of the Board

7. The Board noted that two intergovernmental organizations in status with UNCTAD had changed their names: the International Conference of African States on Insurance Supervision had changed its name to the Inter-African Conference of Insurance Markets (Conférence Interafricaine des marchés d'assurance); the Andean Reserve Fund had changed its name to the Latin American Reserve Fund.

(b) Designation of non-governmental organizations for the purposes of rule 77 of the rules of procedure of the Board

8. The Board approved the applications of two non-governmental organizations and decided to classify them as follows:

Special category: International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) (TD/B/EX(16)/R.1) to participate in the work of the Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities;

General category: International South Group Network (ISGN)(TD/B/EX(16)/R.2).

9. The Board also noted that the Baltic Exchange should be deleted from the list provided for in rule 77 of the rules of procedure of the Board.

Item 6: UNCTAD's Technical Cooperation Plan for 1998-2000

10. The Board took note of UNCTAD's Technical Cooperation Plan for 1998-2000 (TD/B/EX(16)/2).

Item 7: Other business

(a) Membership of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget for 1998

11. The Board took note of the membership of the Working Party for 1998, as follows: Bangladesh; Brazil; China; Ethiopia; France; Indonesia; Ireland; Japan; Kenya; Mexico; Morocco; Norway; Pakistan; Poland; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Sweden; United States of America; Uruguay.

(b) UN/IMO Diplomatic Conference on Arrest of Ships - General Assembly resolution 52/182

12. The Board endorsed the arrangements of the Diplomatic Conference proposed by the UNCTAD secretariat in document TD/B/EX(16)/4, as follows:

(a) The Conference would be scheduled to be held in Geneva for a period of two weeks from 1 to 12 March 1999;

(b) The Secretaries-General of UNCTAD and IMO would make the necessary arrangements, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/182, to hold the Conference and to submit to the Conference all relevant documentation, including draft rules of procedure of the Conference, as well as to arrange for all required facilities for the Conference;

(c) The Conference would establish one main Committee to consider the entire substantive work of the Conference;

(d) The languages of the Conference would be Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

(c) Savings resulting from improved overall cost effectiveness

13. The Board adopted draft decision TD/B/EX(16)/L.3, as amended by the President. (For the text of the decision, see below.)

Decision 448 (EX-16): Savings resulting from improved overall cost effectiveness

The Trade and Development Board,

Recalling paragraph 107(a) of "A Partnership for Growth and Development" (TD/378), paragraph 33 of General Assembly resolution 51/167 and paragraph 54 of General Assembly resolution 52/220,

Decides:

(a) To request the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to present as soon as possible to the Working Party on the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme Budget a detailed report on the savings achieved pursuant to the ninth session of the Conference and paragraph 54 of General Assembly resolution 52/220;

(b) That the Working Party should meet urgently to review the savings resulting from the improved overall cost-effectiveness achieved pursuant to the ninth session of the Conference, including restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery and reform of the secretariat, and to analyse proposals, when forthcoming, on the use of such savings;

(c) That the Working Party should propose recommendations on how to allocate in the 1998-1999 budget cycle a part of the savings already achieved with a view to strengthening UNCTAD capabilities, including *inter alia* technical cooperation.

(d) UNCTAD calendar of meetings

14. The Board approved the revised calendar of meetings for 1998. (For the revised calendar, see TD/B/44/INF.2/Rev.1.)

Item 8: Report of the Board on its sixteenth executive session

15. The Board authorized the Rapporteur to complete the report on its sixteenth session under the authority of the President. It requested the secretariat to circulate a synoptic report of the proceedings as soon as possible; this synoptic report would serve as the Board's report to the General Assembly.

Annex

AGENDA FOR THE SIXTEENTH EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE BOARD

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Follow-up to the WTO High-level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for Least Developed Countries' Trade Development (27-28 October 1997)

3. Organization of the process of the mid-term review in accordance with the Midrand Declaration and General Assembly resolution 52/182

4. UNCTAD's publication policy in accordance with the decision of the fifteenth executive session of the Trade and Development Board

5. Institutional, organizational, administrative and related matters:

   (a) Designation of intergovernmental bodies for the purposes of rule 76 of the rules of procedure of the Board;

   (b) Designation of non-governmental organizations for the purposes of rule 77 of the rules of procedure of the Board

6. UNCTAD's Technical Cooperation Plan for 1998-2000

7. Other business:

   (a) Membership of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget for 1998

   (b) UN/IMO Diplomatic Conference on Arrest of Ships - General Assembly resolution 52/182

   (c) Savings resulting from improved overall cost effectiveness

   (d) UNCTAD calendar of meetings

8. Report of the Board on its sixteenth executive session